An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Whole School Evaluation  
Management, Leadership and Learning  

REPORT  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Ballysteen NS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ballysteen</td>
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<td>Askeaton</td>
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<td>Co. Limerick</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 23-11-2016
WHAT IS A WHOLE-SCHOOL EVALUATION: MANAGEMENT, LEADERSHIP AND LEARNING?

Whole-School Evaluations – Management, Leadership and Learning report on the quality of teaching and learning and on the quality of management and leadership in a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of educational provision in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated and reported under the following headings or areas of enquiry:

1. Teaching and learning
2. Support for pupils’ wellbeing
3. School leadership and management

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school’s provision in each area. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.
**INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>21-23 November 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Analysis of parent, pupil questionnaires&lt;br&gt;Observation of teaching and learning&lt;br&gt;Examination of pupils’ work&lt;br&gt;Interaction with pupils&lt;br&gt;Feedback to senior management team and teachers, and to parent and board of management representatives</td>
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- Meeting with principal
- Meeting with representatives of the board of management
- Meeting with representatives of the parents’ association
- Meetings with teachers
- Review of relevant documents

**SCHOOL CONTEXT**

Ballysteen NS is a co-educational primary school. The school has two mainstream teachers, one of whom was appointed in September 2016 and the other in November 2016. One full-time support teacher and two part-time support teachers also serve the school. There are 33 pupils enrolled in the school and attendance levels are generally good.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum and they participate in a range of national initiatives which enhance their learning.
- While the quality of pupils’ learning attainment ranges from satisfactory to good, there is scope to develop their core literacy and numeracy skills further.
- Teachers are hardworking and they are committed to the pupils in their care; due to significant changes in personnel, agreed benchmarks in teaching and learning should be established across the curriculum.
- While pupils in support settings are making appropriate progress, the organisation of provision merits review.
- The principal promotes a climate of improvement and manages the day to day running of the school effectively.
- A strong sense of community pervades all aspects of school life and support for pupils’ well-being is commendable.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To improve attainment in literacy and numeracy, the facilitation of a shared understanding of the curriculum content to be taught at each class level, the methodologies through which the curriculum is taught and agreed benchmarks of attainment should be prioritised.
- The organisation of support teaching should be reviewed to ensure that the provision adheres to the *Learning Support Guidelines* and to *Special Education Circular 02/05*. The extension of team-teaching approaches across the school is advised.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE LEARNING ACHIEVEMENTS OF PUPILS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning achievements ranges from satisfactory to good. Pupils experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Pupils’ knowledge, skills, health and well-being are enhanced through their participation, on a cyclical basis, in a number of national initiatives. Pupils’ responses to questionnaires administered during the evaluation indicate that most pupils enjoy learning.

- The overall attainment of pupils in English is good. The school has introduced improvement initiatives to increase pupils’ motivation to read and to improve pupils’ reading fluency with some success. A whole-school emphasis on the promotion of specific literacy skills is necessary to further improve pupil attainment. Pupils’ ability to write in a variety of genres is being developed systematically through a process approach to writing.

- Tá gnóthachtáil na ndaltaí sa Ghaeilge idir meartha agus maith. I ranganna faoi leith, tá réimse foclóra, bun struchtúir chainte, rainn agus amhráin á sealbhú go héifeachtach ag na daltaí. Tá éagsúlacht súntasach le sonraí ámh maidir le cumas teanga na ndaltaí ag na ranglebhéil difriúla. Tá gá le leanúnacht agus forbheadhmiú nios fearr ó rang go rang agus le treoir nios soiléire sa phhean scoile maidir le réimse na teanga agus na gnéithe gramadál gur chóir a thabhairt faoi ag gach ranglebhéil. Moltar scileanna léitheoireachta agus scríbhneoireachta na ndaltaí a fhorbairt go fóill.

Pupils’ attainment in Irish ranges from fair to good. In some classes pupils are acquiring a range of vocabulary, language structures, poetry and song effectively. There is a noticeable difference however, in pupils’ language ability at the various class levels. There is a need for greater progression and continuity from class to class and for clearer direction in the school plan in relation to the range of language and grammar to be taught at each class level. It is recommended that pupils’ reading and writing skills are developed explicitly.

- Pupils’ attainment in Mathematics ranges from fair to good. The school has prioritised the consolidation of early mathematical skills through team-teaching and co-teaching initiatives. A majority of pupils demonstrate adequate understanding of mathematical concepts, basic computational proficiency and appropriate use of mathematical language. Teachers should ensure that differentiated learning activities are provided for pupils in mathematics lessons and that suitable strategies are employed to assist pupils of varying abilities to improve. The extension of team teaching activities in Mathematics across the school should assist in this regard.

- In Visual Arts, examples of the pupils’ work in a range of media are attractively displayed throughout the school. In Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) pupils discuss topics covered with good levels of understanding.

2. QUALITY OF TEACHING

- The overall quality of teaching ranges from satisfactory to good. The teachers are hardworking and they are committed to providing productive and enjoyable educational experiences to the pupils in their care. Features of good practice noted during the evaluation include; the creation of stimulating and well-resourced classroom environments, examples of high-quality planning and assessment portfolios, the skilful organisation of multi-grade teaching and the effective implementation of active learning methodologies and collaborative learning activities in some lessons. The extension of these good practices to all learning settings would further enhance the quality of teaching. In the parent questionnaires almost all parents stated that the quality of teaching was good in the school.
• In general the quality of teaching for pupils with learning difficulties and special education needs is good. The organisation of support teaching should be reviewed to ensure that pupils are not withdrawn from subjects in which they have an identified need.

• Individual education plans and individual pupil learning programmes are devised for all pupils in receipt of support. While a range of learning targets is defined in these plans, they could be stated more specifically in some cases. Reviews of these plans should include clear documentation of pupils’ progress in relation to the targets set and the recording of modified targets for the next instructional period.

• The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory, however some very effective assessment strategies were also noted during the evaluation. The formulation of an assessment policy should be prioritised to develop a shared understanding of best practice and to ensure that the emerging learning needs of pupils are identified and addressed at an early stage. The data gathered from standardised test results should be used to differentiate learning to greater effect.

3. SUPPORT FOR PUPILS’ WELL-BEING

• The quality of support for pupils’ well-being is commendable. In questionnaire responses, parents indicated that the school is welcoming and that their children are safe and well looked after there. All pupils stated that they felt safe in their classroom and that they could ask for help from a teacher or an adult if they were being bullied. All pupils stated that they get on well with other children in the school.

• A strong sense of community was evident during the evaluation. The parents’ association provide valuable support to the school. Home-school communication is very good and effective links have been fostered with other schools in the community and with relevant professional agencies to support pupil attainment and development.

• It is advised that the school policy on Relationships and Sexuality Education is communicated to all parents.

4. LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

• The quality of school leadership and management is good. The board is properly constituted, meets regularly and ensures that the school is very well-resourced and maintained. Due to recent personnel changes, a challenge for school management is that of ensuring continuity and progression in pupils’ learning and a cohesive approach to the implementation of the curriculum. From an oversight perspective, the board should play a more pro-active role in the formulation and review of curricular policies to ensure that this happens.

• The principal manages the day-to-day running of the school effectively. She has introduced a number of beneficial initiatives, promotes continuing professional development responsive to the needs of the school and fosters a climate of professional reflection among staff.

• Confirmation was provided that the board of management has formally adopted the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools without modification and that the school is compliant with the requirements of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

5. SCHOOL SELF-EVALUATION

The school has engaged positively with school self-evaluation and satisfactory progress has been made in improving pupils’ disposition towards learning and pupils’ learning experiences in the aspects of literacy and numeracy targeted through school improvement.
CONCLUSION
Although the school is in a cycle of change the principal, staff and broader school community are deeply committed to school improvement to benefit the pupils in their care. Due to this commitment, the capacity of the school to develop further is good.
Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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